

Seeding For Construction Site Erosion Control

(1059)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Conservation Practice Standard

I. Definition

Planting seed to establish temporary or permanent vegetation for erosion control.

II. Purpose

The purpose of *temporary seeding*¹ is to reduce runoff and erosion until permanent vegetation or other erosion control practices can be established. The purpose of *permanent seeding* is to permanently stabilize areas of exposed soil.

III. Conditions Where Practice Applies

This practice applies to areas of exposed soil where the establishment of vegetation is desired. Temporary seeding applies to disturbed areas that will not be brought to final grade or on which land-disturbing activities will not be performed for a period greater than 30 days, and requires vegetative cover for less than one year. Permanent seeding applies to areas where perennial vegetative cover is needed.

IV. Federal, State and Local Laws

Users of this standard shall be aware of all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules, regulations or permit requirements governing seeding. This standard does not contain the text of federal, state or local laws.

V. Criteria

This section establishes the minimum standards for design, installation and performance requirements.

A. Site and Seedbed Preparation

Site preparation activities shall include:

1. Temporary Seeding

- a. Temporary seeding requires a seedbed of loose soil to a minimum depth of 2 inches.
- b. Fertilizer application is not generally required for temporary seeding. However, any application of fertilizer or lime shall be based on soil testing results.
- c. The soil shall have a pH range of 5.5 to 8.0.

2. Permanent Seeding

- a. *Topsoil* installation shall be completed prior to permanent seeding.
- b. Permanent seeding requires a seedbed of loose topsoil to a minimum depth of 4 inches with the ability to support a *dense* vegetative cover.
- c. Application rates of fertilizer or lime shall be based on soil testing results.
- d. Prepare a tilled, fine, but firm seedbed. Remove rocks, twigs foreign material and clods over two inches that cannot be broken down.
- e. The soil shall have a pH range of 5.5 to 8.0.

¹ Words in the standard that are shown in italics are described in X. Definitions. The words are italicized the first time they are used in the text.

B. Seeding

1. Seed Selection

- a. Seed mixtures that will produce dense vegetation shall be selected based on soil and site conditions and intended final use. Section IX References, lists sources containing suggested seed mixtures.
- b. All seed shall conform to the requirements of the Wisconsin Statutes and of the Administrative Code Chapter ATCP 20.01 regarding noxious weed seed content and labeling.
- c. Seed mixtures that contain potentially invasive species or species that may be harmful to native plant communities shall be avoided.
- d. Seed shall not be used later than one year after the test date that appears on the label.
- e. Seed shall be tested for purity, germination and noxious weed seed content and shall meet the minimum purity and germination requirements as prescribed in the current edition of Rules for Testing Seed, published by the Association of Official Seed Analysts.

2. Seed Rates

a. Temporary Seeding (Cover Crop)

Areas needing protection during periods when permanent seeding is not applied shall be seeded with annual species for temporary protection. See Table 1 for seeding rates of commonly used species. The residue from this crop may either be incorporated into the soil during seedbed preparation at the next permanent seeding period or left on the soil surface and the planting made as a no-till seeding.

Table 1 Temporary Seeding Species and Rates

Species	Lbs/Acre	Percent Purity
Oats	131 ¹	98
Cereal Rye	131 ²	97
Winter wheat	131 ²	95
Annual Ryegrass	80 ²	97

¹ Spring and summer seeding

² Fall seeding

b. Permanent Seeding

Rates shall be based on pounds or ounces of Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre. Section IX contains some possible reference documents that provide seeding rates. Permanent seeding rates may be increased above the minimum rates shown in the reference documents to address land use and environmental conditions.

If a *nurse crop* is used in conjunction with permanent seeding, the nurse crop shall not hinder establishment of the permanent vegetation.

A nurse crop shall be applied at 50% its temporary seeding rate when applied with permanent seed.

3. Inoculation

Legume seed shall be inoculated in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Inoculants shall not be mixed with liquid fertilizer.

4. Sowing

Seed grasses and legumes no more than ¼ inch deep. Distribute seed uniformly. Mixtures with low seeding rates require special care in sowing to achieve proper seed distribution.

Seed may be broadcast, drilled, or hydroseeded as appropriate for the site.

Seed when soil temperatures remain consistently above 53° F. *Dormant seed* when the soil temperature is consistently below 53° F (typically

Nov. 1st until snow cover). Seed shall not be applied on top of snow.

VI. Considerations

- A. Consider seeding at a lower rate and making two passes to ensure adequate coverage.
- B. Compacted soil areas may need special site preparation prior to seeding to mitigate compaction. This may be accomplished by chisel plowing to a depth of 12 inches along the contour after heavy equipment has left the site.
- C. Sod may be considered where adequate watering is available.
- D. When working in riparian areas refer to the NRCS Engineering Field Handbook, Chapter 16, Streambank and Shoreline Protection and Chapter 18, *Soil Bioengineering* for Upland Slope Protection and Erosion Reduction.
- E. A site assessment should be conducted to evaluate soil characteristics, topography, exposure to sunlight, proximity to natural plant communities, proximity to nuisance, noxious and/or invasive species, site history, moisture regime, climatic patterns, soil fertility, and previous herbicide applications.
- F. Use *introduced species* only in places where they will not spread into existing natural areas.
- G. Lightly roll or compact the area using suitable equipment when the seedbed is judged to be too loose, or if the seedbed contains clods that might reduce seed germination.
- H. See Section IX. References for suggested seed mixes (NRCS, WisDOT, UWEX) or use their equivalent.
- I. Turf seedlings should not be mowed until the stand is at least 6 inches tall. Do not mow closer than 3 inches during the first year of establishment.
- J. Seeding should not be done when the soil is too wet.

- K. Consider watering to help establish the seed. Water application rates shall be controlled to prevent runoff and erosion.
- L. Prairie plants may not effectively provide erosion control during their establishment period without a nurse crop.
- M. Topsoil originating from agricultural fields may contain residual chemicals. The seedbed should be free of residual herbicide or other contaminants that will prevent establishment and maintenance of vegetation. Testing for soil contaminants may be appropriate if there is doubt concerning the soil's quality.
- N. Consider using mulch or a nurse crop if selected species are not intended for quick germination. When mulching refer to WDNR Conservation Practice Standard Mulching for Construction Sites (1058).

VII. Plans and Specifications

Plans and specifications for seeding shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying this practice.

All plans, standard detail drawings, or specifications shall include schedule for installation, inspection, and maintenance. The responsible party shall be identified.

VIII. Operation and Maintenance

- A. During construction areas that have been seeded shall at a minimum be inspected weekly and within 24 hours after every precipitation event that produces 0.5 inches of rain or more during a 24-hour period. Inspect weekly during the growing season until vegetation is densely established or permit expires. Repair and reseed areas that have erosion damage as necessary.
- B. Limit vehicle traffic and other forms of compaction in areas that are seeded.
- C. A fertilizer program should begin with a soil test. Soil tests provide specific fertilizer recommendations for the site and can help to avoid over-application of fertilizers.

IX. References

A. Seed Selection References

United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide Section IV, Standard 342, Critical Area Planting.

UWEX Publication A3434 Lawn and Establishment & Renovation.

WisDOT, 2003. State of Wisconsin Standard Specifications For Highway and Structure Construction. Section 630, Seeding.

B. General References

Association of Official Seed Analysts, 2003. Rules for Testing Seed. <http://www.aosaseed.com>.

Metropolitan Council, 2003. Urban Small Sites Best Management Practice Manual, Chapter 3, Vegetative Methods 3-85 – 3-91. Minneapolis.

The State of Wisconsin list of noxious weeds can be found in Statute 66.0407.

United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service. Engineering Field Handbook, Chapters 16 and 18.

UWEX Publication GWQ002 Lawn & Garden Fertilizers.

Nurse Crop (V.B.2.b): Also known as a companion crop; is the application of temporary (annual) seed with permanent seed.

Permanent seeding (II) Seeding designed to minimize erosion for an indefinite period after land disturbing construction activities have ceased on the site.

Soil Bioengineering (VI.D) Practice of combining mechanical, biological and ecological concepts to arrest and prevent shallow slope failures and erosion.

Temporary Seeding (II) Seeding designed to control erosion for a time period of one year or less that is generally removed in order to perform further construction activities or to permanently stabilize a construction site.

Topsoil (V.A.2.a) Consists of loam, sandy loam, silt loam, silty clay or clay loam humus-bearing soils adapted to sustain plant life with a pH range of 5.5 – 8.0. Manufactured topsoil shall through the addition of sand or organic humus material, peat, manure or compost meet the above criteria.

X. Definitions

Dense (V.A.2.b) A stand of 3-inch high grassy vegetation that uniformly covers at least 70% of a representative 1 square yard plot.

Dormant seed (V.B.4): Seed is applied after climatic conditions prevent germination until the following spring.

Introduced Species (VI.F) Plant species that historically would not have been found in North America until they were brought here by travelers from other parts of the world. This would include smooth brome grass and alfalfa. Some of these species may have a wide distribution such as Kentucky bluegrass.